

Richmond Dispatch

MONDAY, OCTOBER 14, 1878.

GOOD MANNETTE AND PETIT MARCELLE.

Drawing the Beans at the Fete des Nations—A Queen for the Evening.

Paul Le Moyne's Choice of a Partner.

I am a Frenchman; my name is Paul Le Moyne; my home is in Yverdon, in the canton of Vaud, in the Swiss Confederation.

My father was a miller. In the little town within sight of the great white wheel, my aunt dwelt, with a white handkerchief round her head and a white apron covering her blue gown, from morning until night.

Everything was clean and bright; everything was pretty.

My mother lived very near us. She was a little younger than I. She was a modest little creature.

One could not call her pretty, though she had a good face and a neat figure. She was always pleasant, always good-mored, always ready to oblige.

No one could help liking her; but no one fell in love with her.

She was, as I have said, not a beauty, and she was poor. She would have no portion. She could not afford nice dress and ornaments.

Beside Marcelle she looked as a little brown, homely-looking creature, beside some of the beauties of the town.

Marcelle might have been a queen. Her father was rich. She would have a portion worth counting when she married.

She had all that beauty needs for its adornment.

She had no cares—no anxieties; and if Marcelle gave me her hand for the dance I was proud, and the other young men envied me.

When I danced with Marcelle it was out of kindness, because I would not slight a neighbor—a neighbor who had been so kind to me, for when I had the fever which made every one else fear to approach the house, Marcelle came and nursed me, and when I was better, never weary of amusing me.

"I would thank you, my sister, little friend!" I said to her.

She answered: "Call me sister; it will be the same."

But as I looked at her I saw a strange, sad look steal across her face.

"Art thou weary with all this watching, little sister?" I asked.

She smiled and shook her head, and said: "No."

But I was troubled.

Oh! Marcelle was pleasant, sitting at the fireside in the winter-time knitting deftly and rapidly, the firelight glancing in her black eyes and on the black waves of her hair.

She was full of chat then, and laughed merrily, and I liked to sit near her and listen as I watched her fingers fly; but when we were in gay company I forgot her for Marcelle. Marcelle was beautiful and a coquette.

Now she smiled on me, now on another. Yverne knew what to hope or what to fear.

Marcelle was always the same. If she liked one, it was forever.

I believe that I was in love with Marcelle, and I knew that she was in love with me.

The night that English folk call Twelfth-night is with us the Fete des Rois. On that night there was always a dance at Yverne, and a large cake was baked, large enough for every man present to have a piece. In it was put a bean.

Before the dancing began the cake was sliced and served. Whoever received the slice in which the bean was placed had the right to choose the prettiest girl in the party to be his queen for all the time of the fete, to devote himself to her as entirely as he pleased.

The man who drew the bean was called the king. Naturally he was envied by all the men, and every girl was eager to be chosen.

My queen, the bean Marcelle should be my queen, and there would be an opportunity to say a few words to her and have the man to whom I said "yes" or "no," indeed, I might even ask her to be my wife. Who would not be proud of such a bride? And she smiled very kindly on me.

I dressed myself in my best, and looked among the potted-flowers for a flower for my queen. The potted-flowers were in my garden-beds; but there were no flowers of the color I wanted there.

I knew Marcelle had some. Her flowers always bloomed bravely, and I ran down the road to the little house to ask for one.

The door was open, and I slipped in. All was quiet. The polished floor shone with the rubbing it had had, so that it reflected the swinging cage in which a canary-bird fluttered and sang.

Through the muslin curtains the golden sunlight fell upon the snow-white walls. Every small pane in the diamond lattice was bright as a gem. The copper pans glittered. The flowers bloomed in a row on the window-sill.

Marcelle had made her poor little home beautiful with the work of her own small hands. But where was she?

No matter. I would take a flower, and kneel by the window of how a thief had entered her house.

What I wanted was a scarlet geranium. There it was, its velvet petals glowing warm and bright amid its green leaves. I took out my knife and cut it off.

Then I went to the clock to hear it ring. But it was silent. I heard a little murmur. Marcelle was talking to some one in the next room.

Softly I thrust my head in at the door, which was ajar.

It was a little bed-room, bare and white, save for an image of the Virgin. The great hall was bright as a gem. The copper pans glittered. The flowers bloomed in a row on the window-sill.

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